Italy During and Since the War

ITALY AND THE WORLD WAR. By Thomas Nelson Page. Charles Scribner's Sons.

America's Ambassador to Italy throughout the war declares in his preface that he has related what he "was able to learn on the spot of the part played therein by the Italian people." He begins with a review of Italian history, so far as it leads into the complications of the present. There are chapters on the Triple Alliance, on Italy's relations with the Balkan States, on the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The troubles that have persisted since the armistice are closely related to the early arrangements between Italy and the Allies centring in the treaty of London. This is Mr. Page's view—or rather his somewhat impersonal analysis of the situation in 1915:

"It is understood that Baron Sonnino's explanation of what has been charged as an example of Italy's wish to drive a hard bargain is that there was no intention of bargaining at all; but the proposal of terms laid down, so far as they related to the Trentino, Trieste, Dalmatia and the Adriatic, was based on the necessity to remove from the field of uncertainty and of future contention questions in which Italy was vitally interested and which, if left open, might create antagonism and clashes between Italy and the other allies which might prevent the peace for which so much sacrifice was being incurred from being established on a permanent basis. These questions concerned Italy's most vital interests, as they related to the redemption of her irredentist elements, and to her securing frontiers reasonably defensible against her age-long foe and oppressor. As to the rest of the terms, the Ægean Islands were, he contended, taken from Turkey and were held by Italy under the treaty of Lausanne, and Turkey had failed to meet the conditions on which they would have been restored to her. The provisions regarding Italy's share in Asia Minor and Africa were based on Italy's right to be placed on a parity with the other great Powers among the Allies, and to have recognized her equal right with them to the development of her economic interests. Fiume was conceded to the Croatians because Russia's consent to the treaty had to be secured and Sazonoff demanded it —ostensibly as an outlet for the Slavs of the South.

"Such, it is understood, are the reasons assigned by the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs of the terms demanded of the Allies. That he was somewhat exacting can hardly be gainsaid, but what he demanded was mainly enemy territory, much of which had been wrenched from Italy, and that he had sound reason for his apprehensions and for the position he assumed, touching the frontier in the Alps and the eastern Adriatic, subsequent events have fully established. The charge which has done Italy so much harm—that she bargained with the two sides to see which of them would give her most for the espousal of their cause—however it may appear to be sustained to those who know only the surface, is not justified in the view of those who knew the Italian people at that time. These know that they could not have been led to espouse any cause but that of the Allies, at least so long as the Allies held out any recognition of Italy's claim to the redemption of her unredeemed co-nationals. The whole body of the correspondence between the Italian Government and Italy's former allies under the treaty of the Triple Alliance discloses the inflexible resolution of Italy to wrest from Austria-Hungary the irredentist regions which Italy, at heart, has never ceased to claim as her own, and which, indeed, had never ceased to claim Italy as their mother, save in so far as Austria, by transposition and other means, smothered their voice. This and the second but equally stringent demand of Italy that Austria should not, without previous arrangement with her, extend her power in the near Balkans in any manner that would change the status quo in the near East were steadfastly maintained by Baron Sonnino from the very first step in his correspondence with the Austro-Hungarian Government.

"The steady enlargement of Italy's idea of what the treaty of the Triple Alliance referred to as 'compensation,' as that idea became defined, the Austria-Hungary representatives termed 'blackmail'; but nothing is disclosed in the Italian correspondence to give reason to believe that Italy would have accepted any 'compensation' which Austria offered or would have offered. Indeed, Baron Sonnino's correspondence is an interesting specimen of the old diplomacy in which the opponent is steadily driven from one position to another without securing anything tangible. Austria was gradually forced to yield, little by little, concessions which she had stoutly maintained she would never yield, and when she had yielded she was never any nearer attaining her aim than when Italy first laid her complaint before her. A reading of the Italian Foreign Minister's correspondence discloses the fact that he gradually unfolded to Austria's startled vision a programme for Italy which meant the complete surrender of every position relating to Italy's claims which Austria had ever assumed toward her much imposed on ally. It will disclose further that he made it plain that it was 'not a question of this minister or that, or of this or that ministry,' whether the conditions defined were demanded, but that those conditions were demanded by the Italian people, and no ministry could stand which did not meet their aspirations."

And as proof that the heart of the nation was right, Mr. Page gives this account of the acceptance of the entrance into the contest:

"The instant that war was declared the people of Italy quieted down. All the excitement which had raged during these last few days had subsided. The people of Italy, fully conscious of what it meant, stopped the noisy demonstrations of the piazzas and set themselves to the silent and serious demonstration of what patriotic devotion could achieve when profoundly in earnest. The Italian people were never so admirable as when in this mood. The day of the actual declaration of war, the streets of Rome were as quiet as on any spring afternoon. All of the stir and struggle had been transferred to that long front where for 500 miles the armies of Italy began the huge task of forcing back their age-long foe from the most difficult terrene known in warfare, fortified to the last point of military science, and defended by an army which its commanders believed so powerful that they had a few months before deliberately delivered gage of battle to half the world."

The following word portrait of the Premier who recently replaced Signor Nitti refers to an earlier period. But it has a keen present interest:

"Signor Giolitti is one of the Italians about whom an outsider finds difficulty in forming a judgment completely satisfactory to himself. His friends defend him and his enemies denounce him with equal vehemence and sincerity. A Piedmontese, devoted to the Monarchy, brave, strong, bodily and mentally, he had had an active past. His name had been mixed up with a bank scandal—his enemies assert, justly; his friends, most unjustly —and he had lived for a time in Germany, whence he had returned to new triumphs. The charge, indeed, appears to have been that he was implicated rather politically than personally, for hardly any considered that he had personally corrupted himself. His ambition was for power, not for wealth. He had now been for fifteen years the head of the Italian Government and substantially the dictator of Italian policy, and though he appears to have retained his power by making capable of reconcilement with any direct line of high governmental principle, he was conceded to be a master in the political game and his friends followed him with implicit faith."

And the author has this to say of the popular attitude toward Fiume:

"The Italian people, who in the beginning knew little of Fiume, had come since the controversy arose to feel that Fiume was Italian, and that an Italian city was being given up to their enemies. And what was more galling to them—that Italy was being placed by her Allies in the same category with those who had fought against them. The former contravened their sentiment, the latter struck them to the heart. To place Italy, as it were, in the same scale with those who had fought against them outraged their sentiment beyond hope of correction. Fiume became on the sudden the token of Italy's sacrifices, and on it focussed the passion of her people."

This book is the work of Ambassador Page. A lover of "Marse Chan" and other stories of his earlier years cannot escape the wish that he had been less weighed down here by a sense of his grave responsibilities to history.

Italian Authors of the Present

IDLING IN ITALY. By Joseph Collins. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Reviewed by MILDRED L. BLUMENTHAL.

Once upon a time some one said "Nothing is more beautiful than to see a man hold his art, trade or function in an easy, disengaged way." Dr. Collins does this. His art is the keenest kind of psychological analysis, accomplished with astounding ease. Beginning with its title, which is something of a misnomer, "Idling in Italy" is an uncommon book. Its studies of literature and life reveal a grasp of the passing inanities and eternal verities not ordinarily associated with an "idling" propensity, unless perforce it be like that of Tennyson's "polish'd gentleman, a bookman flying from the heat and tussle." Moreover, only a part of the volume is devoted to Italy, and that concerns itself with Italian literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As for the rest, in so far as opinions and impressions reflect an author, we learn a little more about Dr. Collins.

In the preface we are told that the purpose in publishing the essays is to awaken a larger interest in America in Italian letters, and to assist any "bewildered reader" of modern Italian literature, but no presumption is made at a thorough digest of contemporary literary Italy. Were it not for this one might be tempted to criticise adversely the art of condensation which is apparent in several chapters. As it is, the book will be found extremely helpful and instructive to any who are interested in Italian literature, for it contains a fund of information regarding the output, spirit and message of those countless Italian authors, some of whose writings and very names are practically unknown in this country. Futurist writers, too? Yes, only they are given a special chapter in which to stretch.

Four significant contemporary literary figures are considered at length. Panzini, who "knows the emotional desires and reactions of the average man, senses his aspirations and his appeasements, understands his virtues and infirmities, and reveals this understanding of his fellows in a diverting and instructive way," but who, unfortunately, is not as "enlightened about women." At least one infers the author believes not as much so as Pirandello, who "did not get his stride until he began to satirize social and domestic problems with an art which is a subtle display of paradoxes and analyses of motives." An altogether novel study is to be found of Papini, the "psychopath, . . . of far-reaching ambitions, . . . who discovered evil and Monism, . . . whose love child is 'The Twilight of the Philosophers,' a cross between a philosophic treatise and popular polemic, . . . an index of his emotional equation"; Papini, who is "Frederick Nietzsche viewed through an inverted telescope," and whom Dr. Collins finally sums up as "a clever, industrious, versatile, sensitive, emotional man of forty, whose mental juvenility tends to cling to him." And, when it comes to that brilliant dissection of D'Annunzio, "poet, pilot and pirate," that Dionysian-Heraclitian-Nietzschian, who is represented as an egocentric, self-conceived *Uebermensch*, Dr. Collins really surpasses himself.

In fact, dissection of one kind or another is the slogan of the book. Even "The Moon and Sixpence," that absorbing but painful caricature of the restive Gauguin, comes in for its share; and Dr. Collins does not mince words when taking issue with Mr. Somerset Maugham in his grotesque attempt, in that novel to relate intellectual or emotional expression of the creative will with the sex instinct.

"The Literary Mausoleum of Samuel Butler" forms the subject of a particularly ingenious and suggestive study. Of course, the attentive reader will be somewhat amused at the author's mild protest against those delightful individuals, more especially biographers who do not leave us "in possession of the cherished delusions that add to our happiness," or who "give us a wealth of sordid details about our gods." True, Dr. Collins does not give us sordid details concerning Mr. Butler. But he does use his ever ready scalpel and microscope to such good purpose that we find ourselves wondering about the Erewhonian god and how it came to pass that so many "intellectuals" admittedly knelt at the shrine of an evidently vain, insensitive, unkind and unreverential Pharisee. But "when false gods go the gods arrive," so we welcome this flash of truth.

Speaking of truth, it flashes often in this book, even when the author concentrates his attention on things other than literature. For instance, Dr. Collins ventures the belief that when woman finally achieves her full liberty and throws off the shackles of the centuries "it will require the best effort of man to outdistance her, even though he has the benefit of ages of experience and the advantage of a start of forty thousand years." And the reviewer, being a woman, finds truth in this! Furthermore, the author maintains that, although "there are undoubtedly many intelligent, honest, serious women who subscribe to St. Paul's teachings of woman's duties and privileges," there are others —"civilied, cultivated, thinking women who do not find that motherhood satisfies their personal development."

Nor is the cry from motherhood to the blatant hypocrisies of the civilized world too long for Dr. Collins, who focuses the lens on Christianity as it is not practised, democracy as it does not exist, marriage as it is not observed and many other things concerning which most of the human species fool themselves. It makes a body wonder whether irritating conventional lies will cease to be the handmaiden of civilization in the dim, distant days which the author contemplates in a chapter on "World Convalescence," when the institutions of the world will be reconstructed to the end that sham and pretence will vanish from national and, let us hope, individual life.

It should not be inferred that "Idling in Italy" contains a series of astute analyses which are purely destructive in character. On the contrary, no reader can fail to detect the note of constructive purpose, sincerity and appreciative understanding which is sounded repeatedly throughout its pages.

Modern Farming

FARM AND GARDEN TRACTORS. By A. Frederick Collins. Frederick A. Stokes Company.

Mr. Collins says that "when Edison said that the horse is the 'poorest motor ever built' he missed the point by just one notch, for of all power producers, either animal or mechanical, man is by long odds the worst of the lot." But man wasn't meant to produce power; hence his prime need of engines to do it for him, and the modern world is coming to see that he needs them on the farm perhaps more than anywhere else, despite the age old tradition of the farmer as a manual laborer. Experts see an answer to our threatened food shortage in greater use of farm tractors; indeed, their value is amply demonstrated.

Mr. Collins tells in this book about all that is to be said of them—how they are made, how to use and care for them, and what they can do. It is knowledge that is become well nigh indispensable to any farmer or gardener. Mr. Collins is admirably clear and astonishingly comprehensive in his explanations.

A Portrait

Rose Macaulay.

Here's Rose Macaulay, authoress
Of "Potterism," which
Explains that you and I are too
Emotional—and sich.

The race is sentimental, shows
R. M.; we let emotion
Instead of facts decide our acts.
There's truth in Rose's notion.

But R. M.'s book's a novel, not
A treatise scientific.
As some believe. To undeceive
I'm going to be specific.

She writes of Hobart, who's in love
With Jane, who loves another,
And how this all creates a squall
That vexes dad and mother.

And as she tells this tale she dwells
With biting satire on
The Potterite, a silly wight
She wishes dead and gone.

And what's a Potterite? Why, you
And I when we permit
Our thoughts to jumble and we mumble
Bromides because of it!

E. A.